

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 04424 220038Z

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7870

UNCLAS MEXICO 4424

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, MX

SUBJ: PRISON VISIT TO LOS REYES

1. ON APRIL 30, ARREST & DETENTION OFFICER, ACCCOMPANIED BY NEW CCS CHIEF ROLFE B. DANIELS, VISITED LOS REYES WOMEN'S PENITENTIARY FOR THREE HOURS. SIXTEEN WOMEN APPEARED FOR INTERVIEWS. READING MATERIAL AND TENNIS BALLS WERE GIVEN TO THE WOMEN.

2. ALTHOUGH AN APPOINTMENT HAD BEEN ARRANGED IN ADVANCE, THE DIRECTORA WAS NOT AT THE PRISON DUE TO ILLNESS. UNUSUAL DIFFICULTIES WERE EXPERIENCED IN GAINING ADMISSION TO THE PRISON. CONOFFS WAITED APPROXIMATELY 45 MINUTES WHILE GUARDS AND SUB-DIRECTOR CASTRO DISCUSSED WHETHER PRISONER MAIL, EMBASSY HANDOUT CONCERNING REQUEST TO PROTEST PRE-TRIAL DETENTION, AND CONOFF'S PERSONAL BELONGINGS WOULD PASS, AS HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN PERMITTED. SUPERFICIAL BODY SEARCHES WERE CONDUCTED.

3. MATRONS REFUSED TO CALL AMERICAN PRISONERS GENERALLY, INSISTING THAT INDIVIDUAL NAMES BE GIVEN. WHEN LIST WAS PRESENTED, MATRONS CHECKED WITH DIRECTORA'S SECRETARY BEFORE CALLING PRISONERS. CONOFFS WERE NEAR COMPLETION OF INTERVIEWS WHEN PRISON GUARDS INFORMED US THE INTERVIEW TIME HAD ENDED. CONOFFS CONTINUED TO INTERVIEW AND DIRECTORA'S SECRETARY THEN EXPLAINED CONOFFS HAD TO LEAVE IN ORDER THAT VISITING HOURS MIGHT BEGIN. CONOFFS HASTILY COMPLETED INTERVIEWS. NEW ADMISSION CONTROLS APPARENTLY RESULT FROM MARCH ESCAPE OF MARGARET HUTCHINS.

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PAGE 02 MEXICO 04424 220038Z

4. WOMEN WERE GENERALLY CALM, WITH MAJORITY OF COMPLAINTS CENTERING ON SUB-DIRECTOR CASTRO. WOMEN ACCUSED HIM OF ACCEPTING PAY-OFFS FOR SPECIAL FAVORS AND SAID THEY HAD COMPLAINED TO DIRECTORA, THROUGH SPOKESWOMAN BONNIE ZAKE, ABOUT HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD AND TREATMENT OF AMERICAN PRISONERS. CONOFF AGREED RAISE THIS POINT WITH DIRECTORA. WOMEN HAD NO SERIOUS COMPLAINTS ABOUT INCREASED SECURITY FOLLOWING HUTCHINS' ESCAPE. ONE PRISONER SAID, "IT'S TIGHTER SECURITY PROCEDURES HARDER ON THE VISITORS THAN ON US."

5. NONE OF THE WOMEN WHO, ON PREVIOUS VISIT, HAD BEEN GIVEN LETTERS CONCERNING PROTEST OF PRE-TRIAL DETENTION, CHOSE TO RETURN THE LETTERS TO CONOFF. ALTHOUGH ALL OF THESE WOMEN WERE CALLED FOR INTERVIEW, ONLY ONE APPEARED.

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